

# Know Your Limitations...

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...**A**nd stay within them. That's a lesson I learned the hard way one night after having worked 12 hours.

Some friends and I decided to work out in the ship's gym, which we call "ego alley." I figured this would be a good time to get back into a regular routine of lifting weights. I soon found I still could lift with the best of them, but the one nagging question I had was, "What will my body feel like in the morning?"

A friend warned me I might not like the answer to that question. "You have nice stretch marks there," he said, looking at my shoulders.

"What do you mean?" I shot back. When I walked to the nearest mirror, I knew what he meant. I had two marks about 5 or 6 inches in diameter on my shoulders. If I had any doubts about overdoing my workout, they disappeared when I lifted my arms over my head. I had terrible pain in my neck. "I'll go to bed and sleep it off," I thought, as I vowed not to work out with so much weight again.

When I awoke the next morning, the pain was worse, and I couldn't move my head left or right. I went to work anyway, but, later that morning, my chief told me to hit my rack and rest my neck because it really was hurting. He said he didn't want to see me until at least 1600, and I was happy to oblige.



The rest helped, but the pain quickly returned when I got up and went back to work. By bedtime, I was in so much pain I barely could distinguish faces. "Maybe another night's rest will do the trick," I said to myself. That thought, however, proved to be only a pipe dream, so I went to the duty flight surgeon, who said I had pinched a nerve in my neck. He gave me some muscle relaxants and told me to do some physical therapy to work out the tension in my neck.

After three days of intense pain, I realized the simple fact that I was out of shape, and it was going to take time to work up to the weights I wanted to lift. I had to stay within my limitations, or I was going to hurt myself seriously. ■

*The author was assigned to VAW-117 when he wrote this article.*